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ABSTRACT

To provide an understanding of the current controversial issues about civic education in U.S. schools, the historical interrelationships of schools, communities, and families and their bearings on civic education revolve around three basic themes in U.S. history. These themes are: (1) the cohesive value claims of a democratic political community; (2) the pluralistic value claims that have sought to preserve individual freedoms and respect the diversity of families and communities; and (3) the modernizing trends that characterize many Western societies. From 1620 to 1820, religion and work overshadowed the civic goal of republican citizenship as the prime purpose of education. In the century from the 1820s to the 1920s, the civic ideals of the United States were often submerged by the confrontation between modernization and pluralism. The 50 year span of the 1920s to the 1970s raised doubts about public education and gave a critical importance to a reassessment of the civic role of schools, communities, and homes in U.S. life. For education in the 1980s, the primary focus of civic study should be the preparation for citizenship in a pluralistic democracy and include ideas that promote cohesion, unity, pluralism, and individualism. The programs of civic education should not be decided only by special interest groups, such as government agencies, voluntarily organized groups, and religious groups but should include public leaders, scholars, and teachers. (DJC)

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CIVIC ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Changing Interrelationships of Schools, Communities, and Homes

by
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Prepared for the Cooperative German/American Conference on the Civic Education of Youth

IRSEE, Bavaria
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In this paper I shall make a few generalizations that I believe will bring out some of the persistent and controversial issues involved in our present efforts in the United States to link schools, communities, and homes and their bearing on civic education.

The paper is divided into four very large chronological periods: Part I deals with the 200 years from 1620 to 1820 when several disparate colonies moved toward independent nationhood; Part II with the tensions of change and growth during the 100 years from the 1820's to the 1920's; Part III with some of the crises of legitimacy in education during the 50 years from the 1920's to the 1970's; and Part IV with what I believe is needed in the 1980's. I find that the interrelationships of schools, communities, and families during these periods can best be understood by recognizing their responses to the persistent tensions arising among three basic themes in American history:

(1) the cohesive value claims of a democratic political community that proclaimed the public goals of political liberty, equality, justice, and personal obligation for the common good;

(2) the pluralistic value claims that have sought to preserve individual freedoms, privacy, and due process and respect the diversity of families and communities based upon kinship, religion, language, race, ethnicity, culture, or locality; and

(3) the modernizing trends characterizing many Western societies that have accelerated centralization in national governments and economics, the growth of cities and industry, and the secularization of knowledge and life styles.

In analyzing and evaluating the interrelationships of schools,

communities, and families in the past and in the present, this history raises such questions as the following:

- To what extent do linkages between schools, local communities, and families promote democratic political values?
- To what extent do they promote legitimate pluralistic values?
- To what extent do they enable participants to cope with modernization in desirable ways?
- If there is conflict, which values should prevail in the the schools; and what division of educational labor should be worked out among schools, communities, and families?

Part I. From Colonies to Nation (1620's - 1820's)

During these 200 years two basic trends can be discerned:

(1) The relatively more congruent and cooperative relationships between schools and homogeneous communities and families (e.g., New England towns, Puritan churches, English Protestant families) gave way to a larger number of relatively more incongruent, conflicting, and competing communities (heterogeneous religious and ethnic groups, movement away from the Atlantic seaboard, growth of cities, commerce, middle class enterprises, and incipient factories).

(2) This variety of relatively localized and self-contained, even autonomous "island communities" operating under different colonial jurisdictions moved toward a more extended and extensive geographical entity seeking a common political community embracing older colonies and newer states.

The first trend weakened the hold of the closely-knit homogeneous or functional communities that had set up town or public schools under the predominately Puritan political/religious authority of government and encouraged the development of private schools initiated and controlled by pluralistic communities of different religious, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural origins. The seventeenth century linkage of school and family in a homogeneous political community gave way to an increasing variety and pluralism of communities in the eighteenth century.

The second trend, signalized by the formation of the new Republic in the late eighteenth century, led many of the founders, preeminently Thomas Jefferson, to propose a new civic role for public schools based upon the democratic value claims of the republican political community they were seeking to form and thus to achieve a common cohesive political unity. Their ideal for education was the establishment of public schools, under the authority of the states, which would be devoted to the public purposes of the new Republic in preference to private schools which perforce were devoted to the private purposes of particular communities and families (whether for homogeneous groups of children in separate church-related schools, or for middle class children in private academies, or for working class youth in proprietary schools that promised to get them jobs in commerce and business).

Despite the formulation of a new civic purpose for public schools to promote democratic "virtues" under state auspices, the idea was eclipsed in the early decades of the nineteenth century by two major movements that diminished the civic role of schools. One was the intense religious revivalism which dominated the lives of

great numbers of families; the other was the modernization of the economy in the form of massive movement of families to the cities and the shift of the workplace for children and women as well as men from households to factories. Religion and work overshadowed the civic goal of republican citizenship as the prime purposes of education.

Part II. The Tensions of Nationhood: Modernization and Pluralism (1820's-1920's)

In the century from the 1820's to the 1920's two major trends stand out: (1) public schools, in comparison with families and other community agencies, played an increasingly prominent and powerful role in American life; and (2) public schools, along with families and communities, were forced to adapt themselves in complex ways to the onrush of economic and secular modernization and the bewildering pluralisms generated by successive tides of immigration. In the conflicts and controversies arising from these fundamental currents the civic ideals of the Republic were often submerged by the confrontations between modernization and pluralism, or coopted by one or the other.

On one hand, schools were importuned to adapt to an aggressive industrialized, business-oriented, urban society (more work discipline, more efficiency, more standardization, more bureaucracy). On the other hand, they were expected to become prime agents for assimilating and Americanizing the immigrant diversities so that a "stable pluralism" could provide the underpinnings of a common political legitimacy and not become an "unstable pluralism"

that would threaten the very survival of the polity.

The idea of public education for public purposes under public control supported by public funds came to be viewed as a prime means to achieve civic cohesion and prevent a segmented society from becoming fragmented into an unstable pluralism. A growing consensus, despite much opposition and shrill controversy, accepted public education as a chief article of faith in the American creed: a belief in free, universal, common, compulsory, secular schooling.

Taking the century as a whole, the arguments for modernizing American society through public schools were winning out over the claims for pluralistic cultural diversity, especially when modernization through business enterprise was portrayed as the truly "American way of life." Public control and funding of schools surpassed private sources; states gained in authority over direct local management and policy often at the expense of parental involvement.

Some educational professionals were willing if not eager to ape the management efficiency of business and industry; others were more concerned for the welfare of children, the poor, and the minorities in the many reform movements that arose periodically to give special attention to the child laborers, handicapped, delinquent, disease-ridden, and dependent. By and large, such reform movements often originated among voluntary, philanthropic, or charitable organizations involving widespread citizen participation, but they then often led to government action and funding. The most successful of such efforts on the national level was vocational education through public schools.

An intermediate step was occasionally tried, i.e., allocating

public funds to private agencies. The trend, however, in elementary and secondary schooling was to deny public funds to private schools, especially on the grounds of religious freedom and constitutional separation of church and state. Here, the religious pluralism of the nation had a major effect. Politically, Protestant groups closed ranks to deny tax funds to Catholic schools; and, for their pains, deliberate sectarian Protestant religious instruction in public schools gradually diminished. This is one of the most crucial and persistent arenas of controversy in American educational and political history. Less and less could one speak of "the community" as of one piece religiously or ethnically.

The most bitter battles were fought in the most pluralistic localities, especially in the big cities where the diversity of immigrants was the greatest. Some immigrant groups opposed or were indifferent to the public schools; others viewed them and used them as the principal means of access to a new and better life. The greatest failures of the ideal of public education before the 1920's had to do with enforced segregated schooling for blacks, Indians, Mexican-Americans, and Asians, whether by law or by the discriminative practices of predominant members of local communities. In both cases, a certain kind of "linkage between school and community" was strong indeed. However, the resilience of many minority families and the persistence of their traditions in the face of monumental modernization have been documented by recent scholarship on the history of the family.

Part III. The Crises of Legitimacy in Education (1920's-1970's)

For a large part of the past fifty years the American people have looked to an activist government as a powerful force for economic and social welfare, especially during the New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontier, and Great Society. But from the mid-1960's to the present we have entered an era of decline in confidence in the efficacy of government and other public institutions. The public opinion polls for a decade tell us this.

This political and moral malaise has tended to undermine faith in public education and has led to increasing doubts about the very idea of public education with its historical reliance upon state systems of free, universal, common, compulsory, secular schooling.

It is this setting of the past decade and a half which gives critical importance to a reassessment of the civic role of schools, communities, and homes in American life. Much will depend on the way the American people respond to an excessive privatism in politics and an excessive pluralism in education. I sum up three trends of the past 50 years as follows:

- o Freedom in education has generally been enhanced for parents, children, and teachers, but this often happened only as the linkages between schools and the dominant segments in the community were weakened rather than strengthened.
- o Equality of opportunity in education has been pursued with some success, but has a long way to go for women, blacks, Spanish-speakers, and other minority groups.
- o Education for a cohesive sense of civic community and public sense of justice has been diminished. Schools have become

so obsessed with "alternatives" of curriculum and so impelled to respond to economic and social demands, usually at the behest of citizen groups as well as of professional critics, that they have neglected their prime purpose of education for citizenship.

My reading of the history thus leads me to be skeptical of any simple or narrow declaration that today schools, community, and homes should be more closely linked. I am skeptical of the simple and unmodified assumption that more participation and more control by parents and local community groups over schools are always for the better. Such linkage, such participation, and such control should be judged on the basis of whether or not they contribute to the overall freedom, equality, public sense of justice, and health of the democratic political community.

Freedom of choice for parents? Yes, to the extent that it also contributes to the freedom and rights and civic learning of children and is consistent with the freedom, rights, and responsibilities of the teaching profession under the First Amendment and of due process under the Fifth Amendment. What is termed "immoral" by parents may be deemed "censorship" by teachers.

Local autonomy and support for schools? Yes, to the extent that they also contribute to the equality of opportunity for historically disadvantaged minorities and are consistent with the fourteenth Amendment and the equal protection of the laws. What is defended as a "neighborhood school" by some citizens may be regarded as a "segregated school" by others. What is viewed as "affirmative action" by some citizens will be seen as "reverse discrimination" by others.

Greater pluralism in education? Yes, to the extent that it not only foster greater freedom and respect for diversity of religious and cultural traditions, but also increases the common sense of civic community that strengthens the legitimacy and the democratic values of the overall political community and constitutional order.

Part IV. What is Needed in the 1980's

I believe that we should now try to change the terms of the public debate. In recent years the most powerful claimants on the schools have been (a) back to the basics, (b) technological literacy, (c) parental choice and consumer sovereignty, and (d) traditional moral and religious values. These diverse claims upon the schools should be judged on the basis of their contribution to the prime purpose of universal education: preparation for citizenship in our pluralist democracy. We should try to develop an intellectual framework about civic values by means of which citizens may better judge the policies put forward by business or labor groups, political parties, religious, or other special interest groups. I believe that the primary focus of civic study in schools should be on the civic values that pertain to the public life of the political community rather than on the private values of religious belief or personal lifestyles that individuals and groups should be free to choose (but not impose on others, especially not by legislation or government regulation).

I believe that the educational profession should reaffirm the priority of its historic mandate to educate for citizenship and to

do so (1) by promoting the most careful scholarly study of the basic historic concepts, principles, and values underlying the constitutional order (about which there has been controversy since the Federalists and anti-Federalists squared off in the Constitutional Convention of 1787) and (2) by giving fair treatment to conflicting views as revealed in current controversies over the role of government and the meaning of constitutional principles for today. I would insist that such study rest upon the best scholarship available in history and the humanities, in political and social science, and in law and jurisprudence.

An important start along these lines has been made in the state of California Framework adopted by the State Board of Education in 1981:

> "The history-social science curriculum, K-12, should be most particularly and most explicitly concerned with those substantive values which form the common core of American citizenship. At all grade levels and subjects, and in accordance with the developmental capabilities of students, the curriculum should focus on the basic civic values and principles which undergird our democratic constitutional order." (p. 8).

At this point, the Framework makes reference to my formulation of a "decalogue of civic values" as set forth in my recent book, The Revival of Civic Learning. Naturally, I am pleased by this reference and hope that the teachers of California will find it useful. But there is still a monumental task ahead to give life and substance to these ideas. The Model Curriculum Standards adopted by

the State Board of Education in 1985 include a similar general pattern.

In my book I selected ten basic ideas or value-oriented claims that I thought could be used as an intellectual framework to guide the designing of civic education programs for the schools. I make no claim for their originality. Too much has been thought and said over too long a period of time to make any such claim. And each value often elicits wide differences of interpretation. My indebtedness to many others is obvious. In fact, I modified my "Decalogue" in response to the Framework committee's adaptation of my original proposal.

So now I suggest a "Duodecalogue" of ideas and values on which our institutions of self-government presumably rest: those ideas that promote cohesion and unity in a democratic political community; and those ideas that promote pluralism and individualism in a democratic political community. There has been a continuing tension, sometimes severe conflict, between the values of Unum and the values of Pluribus, but I believe that American schools should try to promote a realistic understanding of their meaning in the past and in the present, in theory and in practice. (See Figure 1).

As a whole, these concepts represent the kinds of civic values that I believe schools should seek to exemplify in their whole operation as well as in their teaching and curriculum. As "values" they are not lists of competencies or specific goals of behavior. They are conceptions of the desirable elements in our political system which could be used as the criteria by which particular competencies of students or specific goals of behavior may be judged. To put it another way, I believe that those in charge of

designing curriculums should re-examine their programs to determine to what extent they might incorporate these ideas or concepts in their instructional materials, learning activities, and governance practices.

It will be obvious that these are normative concepts, each with extensive histories of scholarly analysis and controversial interpretation in the humanities, the law, and the social sciences. But they are also the very stuff of practical political life and public affairs, and I believe that schools should confront their meaning directly, explicitly, and critically, as appropriate to the age and capacity of students.

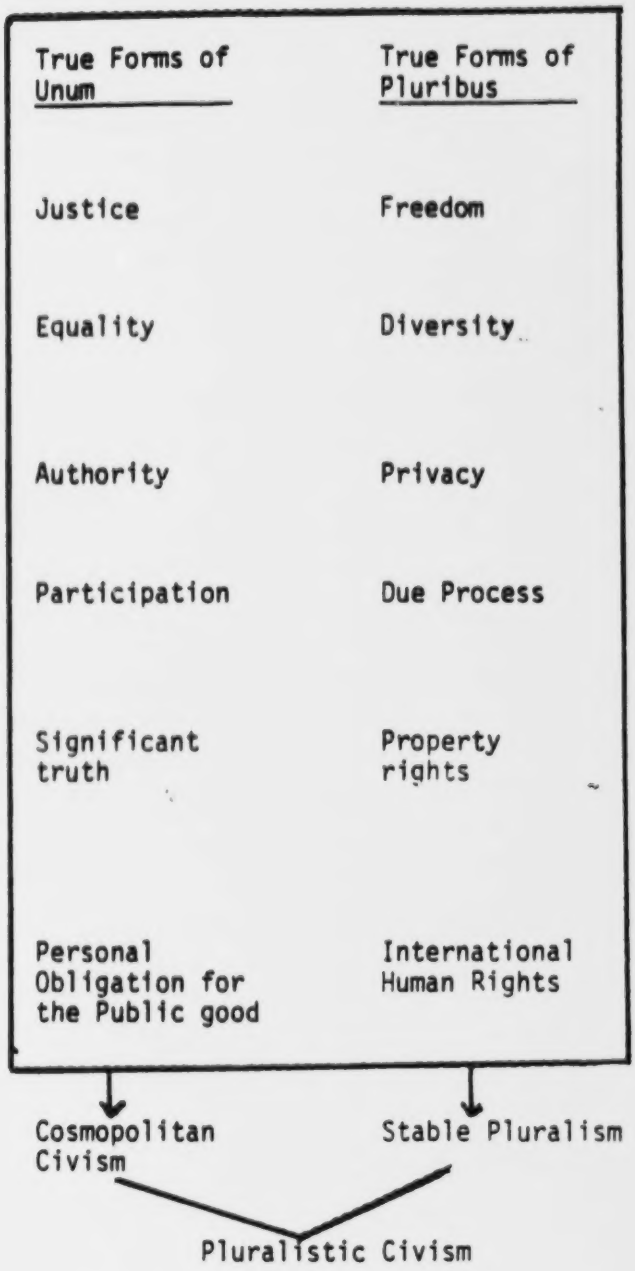
They are not the "new" social science concepts of "role," "status," "stratification," "socialization," "political culture," "decision-making," and the like, as behavioral political scientists might prefer. Nor are they couched in the terms of personal moral qualities or character (such as persistence, tact, self-reliance, compassion, courage, kindness, benevolence, humility, sympathy, generosity, hard work) that some parents might prefer. But they appear in the highest reaches of political discourse and jurisprudence as well as in the ordinary language of governance in schools and communities, in political discussions and campaigns, and in the proceedings of courts, hearings, grievance committees, and policy councils.

I have no illusions that such a formulation will appeal to the whole spectrum of views in the profession or in the public, but I would argue that they come closer to the essence of a revitalized civic education than do the laundry lists of "traits" or

Figure 1

A DUODECALOGUE OF DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VALUES*

Corrupted Forms	True Forms of Unum	True Forms of Pluribus	Corrupted Forms
"Law and order"	Justice	Freedom	Anarchy
Enforced sameness and conformity	Equality	Diversity	Unstable pluralism
Authoritarianism	Authority	Privacy	Privatism
"Majoritarianism"	Participation	Due Process	"Soft on criminals"
Beguiling half-truth or Plausible Falsehood	Significant truth	Property rights	Property rights superior to Human Rights
Chauvinism	Personal Obligation for the Public good	International Human Rights	"Cultural imperialism"



*Adapted from R. Freeman Butts, The Revival of Civic Learning. (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Foundation, 1980), p. 128.

"competencies" so often listed by professional educators in curriculum guides. And I believe a stress on those civic values that bind us together in a democratic political community is the proper civic mission of public education rather than the "traditional moral values" as defined in the public statements of advocates of particular personal life-styles or religious persuasions. The "traditional values" that the schools should promote are the common civic values that underlie the democratic constitutional order.

My former colleague at Columbia University, Charles Frankel, once described the function of the humanities this way:

> In every generation in which the humanities have shown vitality, they ... have performed an essential public, civic, educational function: the criticism and reintegration of the ideas and values of cultures dislocated from their traditions and needing a new sense of meaning.

I believe that Frankel's statement about the humanities applies broadly to the task that lies before the American teaching profession today, namely, to engage in thoroughgoing study of the traditional values that underlie our common civic life and to make the critical effort to reintegrate those ideas and values into a new formulation of a vision of American citizenship for the present decade, a decade that culminates in the bicentennials of the framing and adoption of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

This requires the most thoroughgoing and continuing kind of self-study in academic and professional conferences, seminars, and workshops, but also a concerted series of cooperative discussions, forums, and national commissions enlisting public groups and

voluntary organizations that have the welfare of public schools at heart. This is not a task for the educational profession to undertake in isolation from the public, but it is one in which the profession and the academic community should take the lead. There are many public interest associations already in place for such collaboration. Two newly-formed coalitions of national organizations seem particularly appropriate: the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship and the Domestic Policy Association.

I believe that the time is ripe for a renewed effort to formulate the values that underlie our common civic life and that should underlie the variety of civic education programs in the schools purporting to develop informed citizens for a democratic pluralistic society. This would require a frankly normative analysis of the moral and philosophical assumptions that should be the basis of a common cohesive framework of civic ideals and that bind together the different parts of the nation with its diverse racial, ethnic, religious, political, and economic interests.

This normative vision of American citizenship upon which a variety of programs of civic education can be based in the coming decade is <u>not</u> an appropriate task to leave to agencies of government to undertake directly, for fear of political or partisan indoctrination. It is <u>not</u> appropriate to be left to voluntary organized groups with special economic or political interests, or to research think-tanks whose dominant concerns are "value-free" empirical research or monolithic ideological views. It is <u>not</u> appropriate to be left to sectarian religious, ethnic, or social groups. It is <u>not</u> a task to be left to the press, to the media, or

to the commentators.

All such groups will be making their special claims for particular social, civic, or moral values, as they are, and should be, free to do. But what is needed is the sustained effort by groups of outstanding public leaders, scholars, and teachers in the humanities, in the social sciences, and in the law to state clearly, explicitly, and persuasively what American citizenship should come to mean during the final decades of the twentieth century and what schools, colleges, and teacher training institutions can and should be doing to bring it about. This would involve not only the most fundamental consideration concerning the kind of society and world we face in fact, but the kind of society and world we would like to bring about as the United States enters its third century.